

We are glad to perceive that, while several of our contemporary Journals of the Presidencies are deprecating the prevalence of piracy in these seas, and seem fully aware of the magnitude of the evil, and its injurious operation on our trade, the advantages of Singapore as a Free port are neither overlooked nor underrated, and that the proposed scheme of levying duties at this Settlement, under the specious pretext of providing a fund for the suppression of piracy, meets with almost general condemnation. When Government is understood to contemplate such a measure it is natural enough for the *Bombay Courier* to enquire, "Where are all our ships of war? Upon what are they employed that they cannot be spared for this duty?" It does certainly appear singular enough that Government should menace the trade of this Settlement with a tax for our protection against piracy, while the people of India are paying £60,000 per annum to his Majesty's Government for the mere presence of a few ships of war in the Indian Seas;—a sum more than double the annual amount of duties which, under the schedule submitted by the local authorities, could be expected to be raised here!—We have before remarked that the occasional visits of a ship of war to the Straits, however actively engaged, prove no effectual check to acts of piracy. The Commanders of these vessels, be they ever so willing to exert themselves, are all under the order of a superior officer, residing at a distance from the scene of their operations, whose order for their attendance in some distant quarter where a pirate is a miracle, must be obeyed, no matter on what beneficial duty or service it may find them employed. "Instructions to attend the Admiral,"—in all probability to be dispatched on some trivial errand, or in search of a treasure freight—service for an old woman,—are to interrupt and take precedence of every other call. We presume it was in obedience to some such mandate that, a few months ago H. M. sloop of war *Rose* was summoned away from Penang, leaving the Straits full of pirates, from whose position herself and boats were compelled to retreat. It is true that the *Wolf* arrived in time to supply her place, but late events had shewn that pirates were sometimes formidable enough to require two vessels of war to be employed against them; and instead of having another vessel to supply her place, it is obvious the *Rose* ought to have remained for the purposes of co-operation. The *Wolf* which had been for some weeks so actively employed, we have lately seen called away to Madras for the sole purpose of laying in a store of provisions (which could have been so easily supplied here) leaving the work on which she had been engaged only half begun; & there is not now a single vessel out of all H. Majesty's naval force in the Indian seas, in the only spot where they are really wanted, or where they can be of any use—excepting to themselves. It is true that the "*auri sacra flumina*" is not likely to be appeased by such an occupation as Malay pirate-hunting;—but we think it a pity that the paltry consideration of some pickings from specie-freights should outweigh those of a so much better order, among our ships of war on the Indian station, even when the profit, or the distinction attending the service, is perhaps neither of them a suitable or commensurate return for its fatigues.—What there is to prevent the Supreme Government from calling upon His Majesty's ships of war in India to render assistance wherever their services may be most needed on this side the Cape, we really do not know—but we presume that that force is not entirely at the disposal of its own immediate head. And surely the expedient of a simultaneous and maintained effort for the suppression of piracy, through their instrumentality, ought to be attempted, before it should be seriously proposed to levy taxes here to support an establishment for the protection of our trade. What in effect, would such a measure be (besides its other consequences) but to tax this place in order that His Majesty's ships of war in India might be as idle and as useless as if lying at anchor in Plymouth harbour?

It has been said, that vessels of such size, even with the assistance of the best boats, are not the fittest for employment against the pirates in these seas and straits. And this is, no

doubt, in some respects true, as in the late instance of the *Wolf's* boats, attacking a large fleet of proas, which completely outsailed them, & made their escape to a place of shelter on the coast, with the loss of a few lives, to be sure, but without any very material injury to the pirate vessels. But, for such exploits as that of the *Harrier* at the Arroas, and at other places in the straits, where pirate communities were attacked in and driven from their haunts, a ship of war is, in all respects, the best adapted. It is, we apprehend, by striking blows of this description that piracy will be most effectually subdued throughout all this neighbourhood—such examples being calculated to carry more terror into their communities than the occasional capture of their boats at sea. But in order to enter effectually upon such a plan of operations, we should think the employment of steam a requisite almost indispensable, as nothing can so well secure the means of following these depredators into their most secret and secure haunts.

It is probable we shall owe relief from these depredations, and protection to our trade, to a neighbour in these seas to whom we are under very few obligations of the kind. We have lately been given to understand that the Batavia Government has taken into serious consideration the immediate setting on foot of measures for the effectual suppression of piracy in the seas of the Archipelago, and that they have commissioned an able and experienced Officer, Major ROLFF, to proceed to their neighbouring settlement of Rhio for the express purpose of instituting such enquiries, and obtaining such information, as will enable them to devise such a plan of operation as may be acted on with promptitude, and effect. The former and present Resident of Rhio are associated with Major ROLFF in this commission, and it is understood they will shortly proceed together on an embassy to the Sultan of Linga, to make some arrangement for securing his co-operation, and very probably at the same time to give that Rajah such evidence of their intention as will, in the meantime, make him more scrupulous than he is generally supposed to be with respect to the description of merchandise which he admits into his ports. Major ROLFF is, we believe, Superintendent of the Flotilla which the Government of Netherlands India maintains for service against the pirates, consisting of the two iron steamers which lately arrived from Europe, six armed schooners of three classes, besides a numerous and well-equipped fleet of gun-boats. The schooners of the largest class mount four brass 6-pounders aft, two 4-pounders forward, with a long eighteen, traversing on a slide a-midships; the others are smaller, but none of them carries less than four large guns, besides a swivel-gun mounted amidships. We have it from good authority that the result of Major ROLFF's inquiries have led him to believe that the two iron steamers, besides a considerable portion of the force mentioned, could not be more effectually employed than on the seas in the neighbourhood of Rhio and the southward of these Straits, the very focus of those piracies from which our trade has so long suffered. We have not heard that the co-operation of the Supreme Government in this undertaking has been requested, but it would be scandalous were it withheld after witnessing any effectual demonstration of the intention of the Batavia Government.